

Action Card 13

PLANNING THE OPERATION

Upon establishing operation headquarters in Florida in December 1953, the Agency started recruiting pilots, oversaw the training of rebels, set up a radio station to use for propaganda purposes, and stepped up the diplomatic pressure on Guatemala. Although they couldn't halt the exports of coffee, a major industry in Guatemala at the time, they succeeded in foiling two deals to buy arms and ammunition from Canada and Germany. Faced with dwindling military supply and witnessing the buildup of armaments in neighboring countries, Arbenz started to seriously take into account the possibility of an invasion, which had been rumored for months and finally confirmed when a defector from the Agency's stable of rebels informed the Arbenz regime of PBSUCCESS and its details, and began looking for potential sellers of crucial supplies. This brought Arbenz to conclude a deal, announced in the newspaper *El Imparcial*, with Czechoslovakia for arms; apparently Czechoslovakia had kept tons of captured German arms in storage since the end of World War II, a decade before. The Czechoslovakian arms were delivered on a Swedish freighter named *Alfhem* which departed from the Polish port Szczecin. The freighter delivered the arms in the city of Puerto Barrios. The U.S. State Department and the CIA tried to delay and stop the freighter. In one instance they worked quickly to stop the shipment but they miscalculated and believed the shipment was on a ship called *Wulfsbrook*. This provided a window for the *Alfhem* to make it to



Guatemala. Arbenz intended for the shipment to be a secret. He wanted to give some of the arms to the workers' militia and then give the remaining to the army. Now he was forced to give them all to the army. This was seen by politicians as a rift between Arbenz and the military. While the cash-and-carry deal was made with a Soviet Bloc country, not with the Soviet Union, when the arms shipment arrived, the CIA took their opportunity and promoted the transaction as proof of the Soviet hand pulling the strings. The American public was told only that Guatemala was undergoing a "revolution."

After the revelation of the Czech arms shipment and the domestic support it whipped up, the U.S. drastically stepped up both its covert and overt campaigns. On May 20, 1954, the US Navy began air-sea patrols under the twin pretexts of arms interdiction and protection of Honduras from Guatemalan invasion. On June 7, a "contingency evacuation" force, consisting of five amphibious assault ships plus an "anti-submarine warfare" (ASW) aircraft carrier was dispatched to the area. Embarked was a US Marine Battalion Landing Team; meanwhile the only utility of the ASW carrier in the situation could have been for helicopter assault (then under development by the US Marines).

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1954_Guatemalan_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat

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